

[Dunnell #15]

7/7/39 Mr. G.O. Dunnell - Hay, Grain and Feed Man Paper 15

[Mass.

1938-9?]

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STATE MASSACHUSETTS

NAME OF WORKER ROBERT WILDER

ADDRESS NORTHFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

SUBJECT LIVING LORE

NAME OR INFORMANT G.O. DUNNELL

ADDRESS NORTHFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

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Name: Robert Wilder

Title: Living Lore

Assignment: Northfield

Topic: G.O. Dunnell-Hay, Grain and Feed Man Paper 15

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I stopped in to ask Mr. Dunnell if he would like to go along with me on an errand to Lake Pleasant, our "resort" lake beyond Millers' Falls. Mr. Dunnell's rheumatism was "botherin'", business was dull and the excursion proved to be a pleasant diversion.

As we jogged along in my ancient puddle jumper Mr. Dunnell reminsced.

"The only time I ever went to Lake Pleasant was when I was working in Deerfield, and the railroad run an excursion from Greenfield one Sunday. I wanted to hear Nellie Brigham. She was a Colrain girl. Nope, I never took much interest in Spiritualism.

"They was a feller up in Colrain that felt somethin' the way I do now. He had no use for Spiritualists. But his wife was a real devout one. Used to go to all the meetings, and to the camp meeting at Lake Pleasant.

"Lake Pleasant was quite a place in them days - that is, summers.

They wan't nothin' but a few caretakers there winters. The cottages set right side by side, close enough so that you couldn't walk between most of 'em. And they wan't anywhere near the lake, 'cept a few of 'em. They was all through the woods, laid out in blocks with streets and numbers and things. They was a common, somewheres near the center, where they had balloon ascensions and parachute jumps, sometimes. And they was hotels and stores and boarding houses - everything in the pine woods. And, of course, a railroad station. They was a steamboat landing, too, where you could get a ride around the lake for ten cents, and wooden swings, with backs, that would hold two people. They was a couple of amphitheatres in the woods with wooden seats, where if it rained, everybody would get wet except the speaker 2 or the band, which had a little house of their own, [down?] in the center. And, of course, they was the Temple, which was a kind of a church for the Spiritualists. They was also a circle of wooden benches around a flag pole, 'way off in the woods, where the 'mystic circles' was held. And practically every house had a fortune teller in it. Most of 'em wan't Spiritualists at all. They was only in the thing to make money. Oh,

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it was some place. They built a trolley line out there, too. And on Sunday afternoons when the weather was right, the place was jammed like Coney Island. People doing nothing but walk up and down 'til they was tuckered out, then sitting down and watching the rest go by.

"They was wuth wat in'?] watchin' , too. The gals had hair that was done way up high, so that their big hats, with flowers and garden truck on 'em, stood right up edgeways. Their hair made an arch above their faces that looked sunthin' like a fat sausage, or maybe, part of a life preserver- I mean the hair, not the faces. They had on shirt waists with high collars that had bones in'em and ruchin' around the edge. They had heavy black, skirts that dragged in the dust, and when they held 'em up a bit, you'd see a little of a white petticoat with flounces on it. Some of 'em carried parasols, but mostly the fellers carried 'em for them. They was pretty busy, what with holding up their skirts to keep 'em from dragging in the dust and feeling around back, slily, to see that their shirt waist hadn't parted company with their skirt. 'Course, I didn't see any, but just the same, I know that they all wore straight front corsets, 'cause that's what give 'em the funny shapes they had.

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"Oh, yes, I guess we'd laugh at the fellers now. But they didn't look funny then. Those curly brim [d?] erbies would be good for a laugh. And we had long hair, except that it was trimmed - 'blocked' we called it - over our ears and 'round in back, and then our necks shaved, so when we had our derbies on, it looked from the back as if we was wearing felt wigs. And maybe we didn't have some collars[:?] The feller who could wear the highest was best man, I guess. Anyway, some of the collars was stiff, white ones three four inches / high. Our coats was padded in the shoulders - reg'lar feather bed on each side. And our britches was 'peg tops.' Don't know where the name come from out the pants was fairly small around the ankles the flaring in the seat. Then most of us had 'bull dogs' for shoes. They was mostly bright yellow. And they had turned up toes with knobs on 'em. Fairly high heels, too. And we wore detachable cuffs, and ready tied neckties, and [had?] watch chains with things hanging on 'em.

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"But I'm getting pretty fur away from that feller up in Colrain that had the Spiritualist wife, and didn't believe in spirits himself. He lived on the Shelburne Falls-Colrain Road where the trolley used to run. Shattackville was the name of the place.

"One morning before he got up e he was lying there thinking about Spiritualism, and how devoted to it his wife was. And what a comfort it seemed to be to her. 'By George!' he says right out loud, 'I wish that if they's anything in Spiritualism that it would take hold of me! 'He said, next thing he knew suntain' grabbed him. Yes, sir. Yanked him up right out 4 of bed and left him standing shivering out there in the cold. That settled it, he said. He became a believer. Anyway, he built a temple on his place where they used to hold meetings - large building it was, with blue glass [winders?] - still standing, I guess, 't was the last time I was up that way. Folks laughed though. No wonder he believed in Spiritualism. He was a practicing spiritualist all right. Had been right along. Yer see, his business was making cider brandy. And he had his distillery right there next the temple. And as cider brandy is what spirits they is in cider, he was pretty familiar with 'em. They say that that combination of a spirit temple, and a spirit distillery, along with a picnic grove was a pretty profitable thing. And that the spirits made him good and prosperous. I don't know anything about it, but that's what the talk was. Maybe it was the idea of the money he'd make that yanked him out of bed."